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I first heard inklings of the “foster parent bill of rights” before my husband and I received our foster parent license in June of 2010. At the time, the thought of having to write and pass legislation insisting that foster, adoptive and kinship parents be treated with dignity and respect by the people charged with helping them seemed laughable. I didn’t think we needed to legislate common sense.

Since then, we have fostered and adopted three children. After three years of dealing with the state of Michigan and its contractors, I now understand the necessity of this important legislation.



On Jan. 5, 2012, two social workers came to our home for a routine visit to discuss adoption procedures. Because the birth parents’ rights had been terminated nearly four months earlier, they had high hopes of completing our adoption within a few months. On Friday, Jan. 27, we received a phone call from a licenser with Family and Children Services, a DHS contractor, informing us that a grievance had been filed against us (they refer to it as a “special evaluation”). Knowing that the guidelines state they must meet with us within 24 hours, I told the licenser I could meet her at her office within the hour. She refused to meet with us until Jan. 30. That’s when we learned that the social workers who were in our home on Jan. 5 were accusing my husband of mistreating our son in their presence.

It took the agency another four months (until April 23) to complete their investigation. Their accusations proved to be unfounded, but we decided it was easier to complete their Corrective Action Plan than to argue. We completed the steps in three weeks, yet we had to fight to get our adoption social worker back on track to move the adoptions forward. All we had wanted since October of 2011 was for our son to start kindergarten with the same last name that he would have when he graduated from high school. Because of their petty grievance, the adoptions were stalled. We ended up foregoing a court hearing—something my children were looking forward to after being present at their cousins’ adoption—to rush through an approval that came by U.S. mail just in time for the school year.

Throughout this process, every time we asked a question, begged for an update, or inquired about court information, we received slow responses that continuously proved to us that children are not a priority in this broken system. At no point did we feel like anyone appreciated our passionate efforts to give our children the best possible advantages. At no point during this process did we feel that we were respected. And when you disrespect volunteer foster parents, you disrespect the very children they are trying to help.

Our three children are now healthy and thriving. They need constant attention. Every day is a struggle as we continue to learn what triggers bad memories that cause them to act out. But they are ours, and they will be with us forever. Despite the fact that their adoptions were delayed by five months.

We are NOT an anomaly. We are NOT that one family who couldn’t find a way to “get along” in the system. Every parent I speak with has a story like ours. Many are much, much worse. This legislation is necessary, and I urge you to do what it takes to pass both bills. But please don’t stop there. Keep advocating for resource parents so we can stop fighting the system and focus our energies on advocating for the children that need us.